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Checking death counts becomes a macabre ritual for many.
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HOUSTON CHRONICLE

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CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

Busy weekend bodes well for isle tourism

SOCIAL DISTANCING: Despite reminders, safety guidelines not always followed by crowds

By Stephanie Lamm
STAFF WRITER

GALVESTON – For Galveston business owners, the Memorial Day weekend crowds offered hope that, despite the coronavirus, the season will still be a profitable one.

Billy Ray Hayes, a local street artist, weaves and sells roses, crosses and grasshoppers out of palm leaves. He's sat at the same bench along the seawall for 11 years with his dog Tramp Stamp.

On Sunday, as tourists flocked to the beach after being cooped up because of the coronavirus, he said he was having a good sales day. "It's real busy out here," he said.

Galveston's Convention & Visitors Bureau estimates 500,000 people are expected to visit Galveston over the Memorial Day weekend.

Authorities around the nation were keeping a close watch on beaches and other holiday gathering spots. Hundreds of people flocked to a popular Florida beach boardwalk and were seen partying and dancing despite social distancing restrictions imposed by the state, authorities said Sunday.

After weeks of restrictions meant to fight the spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, every state is in some stage of reopening. Many, including Texas, have

Galveston continues on A10

Godofredo A. Vásquez / Staff photographer

A family wears masks Sunday while walking along the beach in Galveston. They appeared to be the exception, however.

Chinatown emerging from lockdown despite trepidation

Godofredo A. Vásquez / Staff photographer

Yumcha Tea House and Bakery is looking to reopen its dining room but is waiting for more employees to return.

INTERNATIONAL HUB: An estimated 50% of retail businesses remain closed, and area's recovery expected to take longer

By Nancy Sarnoff and R.A. Schuetz
STAFF WRITERS

The market at Hong Kong City Mall on Bellaire Boulevard was humming with shoppers on a recent afternoon. A smattering of customers visited the few hair salons and jewelry stores that were open for business.

At Dun Huang Plaza, a two-level shopping center near the core of the region's Chinatown district, the owners of Yumcha Tea House and Bakery were making plans to reopen their dining room, waiting for most of their employees to feel safe enough to return and likely pushing out the day they resume dine-in by another few weeks.

Signs of life are emerging throughout the strip centers and mini malls that dominate the stretch of Bellaire on either side of Beltway 8. But as with the rest of the city, business and retail reopenings have been spotty, and a return to normalcy feels like a distant concept – perhaps even more so in Chinatown.

Asian-owned businesses in this part of west Houston started feeling the financial drag of the coronavirus earlier than others, and some say their recovery will take longer. Many businesses that are allowed to reopen remain closed. Some have locks on their doors or "for lease" signs in their windows.

Much of the pain is a direct result of the pandemic and the shutdown that came with

Chinatown continues on A8

HISD aims to issue all students a laptop

COSTS: A bond vote to pay for the plan would face tall hurdles

By Jacob Carpenter
STAFF WRITER

Houston ISD officials hope to provide every student with a district-issued laptop in 2020-21 and beyond, an ambitious target that would deliver much-needed technology to children but require voters to approve a bond package in the next several months.

Interim Superintendent Grenita Lathan said HISD officials are "working toward a goal" of buying computers throughout the upcoming school year for all 150,000-plus elementary and middle school students. HISD high school students already get computers under an initiative, known as PowerUp, started in 2014.

The laptops would assist families struggling with a lack of at-home technology amid the novel coronavirus pandemic, which pushed most instruction online for the last 10 weeks of this school year and likely will cause some classes to remain virtual into 2020-21.

Once the pandemic subsides, the laptops also would help bridge the so-called "digital divide," providing more opportunities for students from lower-income families to access the internet and other educational programs.

"The goal is, as soon as we get

HISD continues on A19

Astronauts share joy, risks of liftoff with their kids

Before impending launch, Behnken — like his predecessors — prepared son for fiery sight

By Andrea Leinfelder
STAFF WRITER

Bob Behnken didn't want his 6-year-old son to hear the roaring engines and see the flames of a rocket launch for the first time when his dad was in the tiny capsule on top.

So in December 2018, Behnken and Theodore stood along the Florida coast as a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket launched a Dragon spacecraft to the International Space Station. It was similar to Behnken's impending launch Wednesday, but it carried supplies rather than fathers.

"At first he was trepidatious about that and didn't think anyone should go on it," Behnken told reporters in a recent call. But after seeing the launch, "he was comfortable enough to give me approval to go and fly, and then suggested that Mommy could go second and then he was going to go third."

In fact, his mom is also a NASA astronaut. Both Behnken and Megan McArthur have been into space, but that was before they became parents. They're excited to share this experience with Theodore, but they want to make sure liftoff is not surprising or scary. They've spent the past year or so launching and recovering model rockets in their Seabrook

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